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ABSTRACT

Network television news has often been accused of inciting and prolonging incidents of public violence, whether riots or terrorism, and in South Africa this type of thinking has led to increasingly stringent restrictions on both domestic and foreign media covering the violent unrest there. A study determined a chronology of events and analyzed the content of United States network television coverage of South Africa from January 1982 through August 1986, to determine the impact of varying degrees of censorship on the amount and kind of reporting coming from South Africa. It was expected that the restrictions would result in less coverage, and specifically in less coverage of violent unrest and of critics of apartheid. The data showed that in the short term, at least, the coverage actually increased during the two states of emergency that included curbs on the media. The curbs also failed to silence critics. In the longer term, however, the coverage has declined, but this may be due to factors other than censorship. (SKC)

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Television, Censorship and South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Television, Censorship

and South Africa

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Network television news has often been accused of inciting and prolonging incidents of public violence, whether riots or terrorism. It has been suggested that if the TV coverage were to cease, such incidents would stop. This hypothesis has not been tested because the U.S. media have successfully resisted any domestic regulation of their news content.

South Africa, however, has over the past two years clamped increasingly stringent restrictions on coverage by both domestic and foreign media of the violent unrest there. Media that once were free to report on events now are severly curbed. The restrictions apply particularly to television. The South African government's complaints about news coverage are very similar to those voiced in the West, and are used as a justification for censorship.

This study is a chronology of events and a content analysis of U.S. network TV coverage of South Africa from January 1982 through August 1986. It seeks to determine the impact of varying degrees of censorship on the amount and kind of reporting from South Africa.

It was expected that the restrictions would result in less coverage, and specifically less coverage of violent unrest and of critics of apartheid. The data show that in the short term, at least, the coverage actually increased during the two states of emergency that included curbs on the media. Nor did the curbs succeed in silencing critics.

In the longer term, however, the coverage has declined, but this may be due to factors other than censorship.

Television news has often been blamed for encouraging and exacerbating confrontation and violent conflict.[1] In the United States, television crews were blamed for escalating the riots over racial desegregation that wracked the South in the mid-1950s.[2] A decade later, broadcast journalists again came in for criticism for their role in the violence that exploded in the ghettos of northern cities.[3]

More recently, the spotlight has shifted from TV coverage of violence in the United States to acts of violence against U.S. citizens abroad. Here too, the cameras are blamed for inciting and prolonging incidents of terrorism and hostage taking. The seizure of the U.S. Embassy staff in Iran in November 1979 dominated TV news for more than a year, prompting one U.S. Senator to write to the president of CBS News: "I believe that without the encouragement of TV cameras the demonstrations in Iran would slow down and stop." After the seizure of TWA Flight 847 en route from Athens to Rome in June 1985, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher urged that "we must try to find ways to starve the terrorist and the hijacker of the oxygen of publicity on which they depend."[4] U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese said after the TWA hijacking that the Justice Department was seeking talks with news organizations and that it might propose written guidelines on news coverage. But his suggestion was rejected by TV news executives as unnecessary and impractical.[5] Katharine Graham, chairman of the board of the Washington Post, said she was against any government-imposed restriction on the free flow of information about terrorist acts.[6] Such views prevailed, and because news media in the United States have successfully resisted any domestic attempts to regulate their coverage, the hypothesis that violent incidents would subside if they were not reported on has not been tested.

Television reporting on violence in South Africa, however, does provide a case study of what happens when the media, previously free to report events, suddenly are subjected to stringent controls. This paper is a preliminary examination, based on the chronology of events and on a content analysis of U.S. network TV news, of the impact of censorship on the amount and kind of reporting from South Africa. South Africa, unlike the United States, does not have a First

Amendment to safeguard the press against government control. And over the past two years it has clamped increasingly stringent controls on the media, both domestic and foreign, in an attempt to limit coverage of the political violence that has flared there.

The situation in South Africa is different from that in the United States in other important respects also. The blacks engaging in direct action are doing so in part because they are excluded from the normal political process. Blacks, who comprise 70 percent on the population, do not have a vote in national elections. Extra-parliamentary action is seldom reported from their perspective because the government-controlled South African Broadcasting Corporation as a matter of policy plays down reports of interracial confrontation, as does the generally pro-government Afrikaans press.[7] And the more liberal English-language papers, which have a large black readership, are restricted in what they can report. Consequently, large sectors of black opinion do not find expression in the country's media. Political activists have used foreign correspondents to circumvent the censorship and seek support abroad. This is intended to bring international pressure to bear on South Africa to abandon apartheid.

This means also that one of the common criticisms of TV news coverage -- that it causes violence to worsen and spread -- has to be modified in South Africa. Since it cannot be claimed that broadcasting riot scenes on TV encourages similar behavior elsewhere in the country -- because such scenes are not shown internally unless it suits the government's purposes -- it must be argued instead that the mere presence of foreign TV crews can incite an otherwise orderly crowd to violent behavior. Further, the authorities argue that the real impact of TV coverage of violence is not on the domestic audience -- which doesn't see it -- but on viewers abroad. What they see inflames public opinion and leads to sanctions, boycotts, and South Africa's increasing diplomatic isolation.

Despite these significant differences, the criticisms of TV news in the United States and other Western countries find an echo in South Africa, and have been used by the government to justify its restrictions on journalists. The government has long had an uneasy relationship with the media, especially the

foreign press. On the one hand it wants to be accepted as an upholder of Western democratic values, including a free press. That is one thing that distinguishes South Africa from Marxist one-party states to the north, and helps justify white rule. The government seems to believe also that if people in the West were to get objective coverage of South Africa's problems, they would better understand the country's policies.

As a result, South Africa has accepted a large contingent of foreign correspondents. In 1986 there were about 170 accredited foreign media representatives there -- far more than in the rest of Africa combined. As of January 1987, U.S. news organizations with bureaus in South Africa included the Associated Press, United Press International, Time, Newsweek, ABC News, CBS News, NBC News, the Christian Science Monitor, the Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, the Washington Post and the Washington Times. Other newspapers are permitted to send correspondents to South Africa from their bases elsewhere in Africa. In addition, scores of South African journalists serve as stringers for overseas media. The country makes communications facilities available to them, including a satellite uplink for TV video. Yet, faced with the current crisis, the government has clamped down on the media, evidently preferring a reputation for press censorship to nightly scenes of violence on the world's television screens.

BACKGROUND

For purposes of analysis, we identified six periods between 1982 and 1987, each characterized by different levels of unrest in South Africa and different degrees of censorship.

Period 1 (January 1982-December 1983): This is a control period. There were only occasional incidents of racial strife and the media -- especially the foreign correspondents -- were not subject to any unusual restraints.

Period 2 (January 1984-October 1985): This was a period of growing racial unrest, but the media were free to report on events. The current spate of unrest began in January 1984 when black students boycotted schools to protest against apartheid. The protests escalated in August when white voters went to the polls in a referendum for a new constitution that extended voting rights to Asians and

Coloureds, but excluded the 24 million blacks. Serious rioting broke out in September when residents of black townships near Johannesburg called a strike to protest rent increases. More rioting took place at gold mines after a strike over pay for black mineworkers. Thousands of workers staged a general strike in November to protest the use of troops to seal off the troubled black townships. The rioting spread to Cape Town in February 1985 after rumors that the government was going to move 100,000 black squatters from the Crossroads shantytown. In March, on the 25th anniversary of the Sharpeville riots, police shot into a crowd of black demonstrators in the Eastern Cape, killing 20 people. In July 1985, after about 500 people had died in violence related to the protests since they began 18 months earlier, the government declared a state of emergency in 36 black cities and towns.

The emergency decree provided for press censorship. One section stipulated that police could prevent the publication of any information on or comment about the emergency. But the regulations were not strictly applied at first, although the media were forbidden to identify the hundreds of people detained by the security forces, or to enter areas declared off limits.[8] Foreign correspondents continued to move freely about the rest of South Africa, speaking to anyone they pleased and filing reports without restriction. In September, however, the government expelled Newsweek bureau chief Ray Wilkinson because it objected to a Newsweek cover story on South Africa. The Minister of Home Affairs, Stoffel Botha, criticized the report as unfair coverage "that furthers unrest and the cause of the revolutionary by irresponsibly providing a channel for one radical statement after another." Botha said the image of South Africa created by the media abroad was a distortion of the true situation in the country. "As a result, an emotional campaign was started against South Africa resulting, amongst others, in sanctions" against the country.[9] The offending issue of Newsweek was banned in South Africa.

The Deputy Minister for Information, Louis Nel, warned that the government was considering measures against foreign correspondents. Nel told a National Party congress in September that "there are people in South Africa who send out untruths, half-truths, selective reports and create a false and twisted impres-

sion." It was time, he said, for the government to reconsider "whether its hospitality should be extended to people who share in organized lying."[10]

By October the death toll had climbed to 780 lives and 4,300 people had been detained under the emergency decrees. An Afrikaans Sunday paper, Rapport, which has close links to the government, reported that "strong measures can be expected in the next few weeks" to curb the activities of foreign and local reporters. It called journalists the "biggest stumbling block" in the government's battle with the banned African National Congress. "The false image that these sensation-hunters are sending around the world makes the task of the police almost impossible," said Rapport.[11]

Period 3 (November 1985-March 7, 1986): The crackdown came on November 2, 1985 when the government banned the televising, photographing, recording or drawing of unrest in any area affected by the emergency decree. The ban applied to any disturbances, riots, strikes, boycotts, attacks on property and assaults on individuals, as well as to action taken by the security forces. Print journalists were still allowed to report on the unrest, and TV and radio journalists could still give eyewitness reports of what they had seen. But they could not take pictures, nor distribute pictures taken by someone else in the areas under emergency rule. Media were free to operate in the rest of the country, however. Penalties for contravention of the law included confiscation of equipment, substantial fines, or up to 10 years in jail.[12]

Foreign Minister R.F. Botha said the action was taken to end the "vicious and venomous coverage by foreign TV crews." And he accused the foreign press of ignoring government reform initiatives and presenting a one-sided, distorted picture of South Africa, offering TV viewers abroad a "tunnel vision of South Africa aflame." Some South African journalists joined in the attack on foreign newsmen, accusing them of bias and even of "paying black children and adults to burn books and repeat stone-throwing incidents for the purpose of filming them." An editorial broadcast by the South African Broadcasting Corporation declared that "the most powerful weapon of the terrorists is not the bomb or the AK-47 rifle. It is the publicity in the mass media and especially the television screens. That is no less true of the radical activist whose outrageous behavior

is enough to ensure international publicity for his political claims, regardless of their validity."[13]

The restrictions on the media appeared to succeed in reducing coverage abroad. A survey by the Chicago Sun-Times in December found a significant drop in the number of column inches devoted to South Africa in four major U.S. newspapers — the New York Times, the Christian Science Monitor, the Chicago Tribune and the Chicago Sun-Times.[14] Television was particularly hard hit. George Watson, ABC News vice-president, told the Washington Post four months after the curbs took effect that the "sad fact" was that the South Africans had "mostly succeeded in what they wanted to do." Watson said that ABC, deprived of live coverage of the rioting, had done "stand-ups" with a correspondent standing before the camera and telling the story. They had also used graphics instead of film, "but the truth is it doesn't make good television." CBS Evening News anchor Dan Rather said they were "having a hell of a time trying to make it accessible and interesting, but we are determined to continue to report the reality, not the unreality that the government would like us to report."[15] During the riots in the black township of Alexandra outside Johannesburg, for example, the networks were forbidden to enter the area. So they placed cameras equipped with powerful telephoto lenses on hills in white suburbs surrounding Alexandra, and filmed the violence from there. The next day the authorities expanded the area covered by the ban, putting Alexandra beyond the range of TV's longest lenses. Another tactic adopted by the networks was to film violence in areas of the country not covered by the emergency decree, then use those tapes on news programs to show incidents "similar" to ones they could not film.

Despite these attempts to circumvent them, South African officials clearly felt that the curbs on reporting had been successful. The South African ambassador to the United States, J.H. Beukes, said that there had been less trouble in areas where the cameras were banned. "There has indeed been a reduction, no question about that ... but what is more important is that there is no way of telling how much more violence could have occurred if this had not been done."[16]

Period 4 (March 8–June 11, 1986): The decline in violent protests prompted the government to lift the state of emergency on 7 March 1986, seven months

after it was imposed. This also lifted the media restrictions. At the same time, however, the government ordered three CBS newsmen to leave the country because CBS had broadcast a film of a funeral for black riot victims in Alexandra Township, violating a ban on cameras and recording equipment at the ceremony. Home Affairs Minister Stoffel Botha accused CBS of showing "flagrant contempt" for the order, and of regularly seeking film that would damage the public image of the South African government.[17] The government reversed the expulsion order after CBS executives said that "more care could have been exercised in covering the funeral." CBS said it had not wilfully broken the law, but that the South African government "could have had grounds to regard this action as a a defiance of a South African court order."[18]

The end of the state of emergency and its accompanying press restrictions meant that TV cameramen were again free to film scenes of unrest. And there was plenty to film in May and June as rival black factions battled for control of the Crossroads squatter camp near Cape Town. A free-lance cameraman working for Britain's Independent Television News Network, George De'Ath, was fatally injured by a machete-wielding mob in Crossroads on June 10, and several journalists were briefly detained by security forces.[19] CBS cameraman Wim de Vos, one of the three threatened with expulsion earlier, was again ordered to leave the country. This time his appeal was refused.

Period 5 (June 12-December 11, 1986): The violence continued, and on June 12 the government declared a new state of emergency, now covering the entire country, and including a nationwide ban on TV coverage of the unrest. The emergency was declared to avert what President P.W. Botha said was a threat of huge and violent protests planned to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the Soweto uprising of 16 June 1976 that had sparked off a year of violence and nearly 600 deaths. Once again the security forces were given sweeping powers to make arrests without charge, conduct searches without warrant, and ban meetings. The decree also gave the authorities far greater powers of censorship than had been the case in the earlier, partial state of emergency. It forbade TV, radio or photographic coverage of violent protest or of police action to curb it anywhere in the country. The ban included coverage of "any public disturbance, disorder,

riot, public violence, strike or boycott, or any damaging of any property, or any assault on or killing of a person" — in short the very material of newscasts. The decree also made it an offense to publish a wide range of "subversive" statements. These included calls for strikes or economic sanctions, and statements "engendering or aggravating feelings of hostility" among different groups. The decree stipulated also that all news about the emergency would be channeled through the government's Bureau for Information. David Stewart, director of the bureau, said that the authorities would not assist journalists in interpreting the new regulations, and suggested that they hire lawyers. "We expect the media to play by the rules, tough as they may be. We will not hesitate to take action," said Stewart.[20] He said that "we think the presence of media in unrest areas can incite violence. We think that particularly the foreign media have become part of a syndrome of international situations which is not helpful." Stewart also threatened to deport foreign journalists if they called the government a "white minority regime."

Two days later, foreign journalists were ordered not to transmit abroad statements that could be considered subversive. Louis Nel sent a telex message to news organizations saying: "You are earnestly requested that under no circumstances a statement which in terms of the emergency is a subversive statement is broadcast, transmitted or otherwise sent from South Africa."[21] Nel said he had given instructions to the Bureau for Information to "monitor very carefully media reports in this regard." Also on the eve of the Soweto anniversary, the Commissioner of Police, Gen. Johann Coetzee, barred all journalists from the black townships and forbade all reporting of the movements or actions of the security forces.[22] The only exception was if they were disclosed by the Bureau for Information.

TV reporters bore the brunt of the new restrictions. For three weeks they had been able to show dramatic scenes of violence from the Crossroads squatter camp. Now they could not, although the rules stopped short of directly censoring broadcasters. They could file reports but were responsible for the content if they did. It was left to the news organizations to interpret the vaguely-worded restrictions on quoting "subversive" statements. They were obliged to weigh the

importance of reporting a particular piece of information that might violate the guidelines against the risk that their correspondents might be expelled. ABC News anchorman Peter Jennings said that "we have been put in the insidious position of having to censor ourselves under the framework of some guidelines which are deliberately ambiguous. It is absolutely worse than direct censorship."[23]

The day after the curbs took effect the three network evening news shows had no new pictures of violence in the townships. Instead, each showed file footage of earlier unrest. All three networks, as well as the British Broadcasting Corporation and other news organizations, hired lawyers in their South African bureaus to review tapes before they were transmitted abroad.

One stratagem used briefly by the networks to report dissident views was to beam live interviews back to the United States or Europe by satellite. That way, if the person being interviewed said something illegal, the TV organization could claim it had no control over it. "In a live situation, in which somebody said something supposedly subversive, we could come back to them and say we didn't know the person was going to say that," said John Lane, a vice-president of NBC News.[24] But the government quickly banned live transmissions over the country's only satellite uplink. This meant that if broadcasters taped an interview locally, then transmitted it, they could be held accountable for what was said.

ABC fell afoul of the authorities when News President Roone Arledge told a press conference in Los Angeles that ABC was "trying to protest as much as possible and push the limits as far as possible." He noted that an ABC interview with Bishop Desmond Tutu, who condemned the United States for not imposing economic sanctions on South Africa, was "clearly in violation of the regulations set down by the government." The government's response was to request the names and addresses of ABC's bureau staff in South Africa. Intimidated by this, ABC vice president Bob Murphy sent the government a telex saying that "ABC News undertakes to do everything in its power to retain its staff in South Africa and realizes that this involves compliance with the emergency regulations." ABC would protest as much as possible against the restrictions, "but this protest would be done within the scope of the regulations."[25]

Meanwhile, questions asked by reporters at the Bureau for Information's daily briefing apparently irked the government. And on June 19 the bureau announced that it would "no longer allow the news conference to be turned into a circus." Media would in future have to telex their questions at least four hours in advance to get an official response.[26] The same day, President Botha, in his first public appearance since declaring the emergency, complained about hypocrisy in the West regarding South Africa. "A carefully calculated propaganda campaign is unfolding against us internationally and even internally, especially with the assistance of some of the media," he said.

Britain's Independent Television News challenged the restrictions on June 23 when it broadcast an interview with Winnie Mandela, wife of the imprisoned black nationalist leader Nelson Mandela. The tape was smuggled out of South Africa and broadcast on ITN's "World in Action" program. In addition to calling for sanctions, Mandela said that the media restrictions were intended "to prevent any reports about what is happening to our country. The banning of the international media and the media at large from entering the townships and from reporting on the political situation in our country, the idea is to conceal from the rest of the world the deepening crisis within the country."[27] No immediate action was taken against ITN, but its correspondent, Peter Sharp, was expelled some months later. Newsweek correspondent Richard Manning was ordered to leave the country on June 23 after the magazine carried a critical cover story, and a correspondent of Israeli Army Radio, Dan Sagir, was expelled the next day.

The government threatened further action against journalists deemed to be violating the curbs on June 25. Louis Nel summoned foreign correspondents to a meeting in Pretoria and declared that "we do not want a confrontation with the foreign media," but warned that because the government took the situation seriously, "it will not hesitate to take whatever steps we deem necessary to ensure compliance with the state of emergency regulations."[28] Nel told the correspondents that "we do not have censorship. What we have is a limitation on what newspapers can report." Censorship, he said, "means that every report must be approved before it can be published."

The Bureau for Information -- the sole source of official news about the unrest -- announced on June 25 that it was suspending its daily briefings because the state of emergency had reduced unrest to the point that there was little to report. It would continue to issue daily written reports, and special briefings would be held on major events. The government continued its crackdown on foreign reporters on June 30, expelling Heinrich Buettgen, correspondent for West Germany's ARD television channel. He was told to leave because his presence in South Africa "was not in the public interest."[29]

The media won a limited victory in mid-July when a provincial supreme court annulled parts of the emergency regulations defining subversive statements. The definitions it declared unlawful included prohibitions on statements advancing the aims of outlawed organizations, engendering hostility between people, or encouraging "foreign action" against South Africa. Some of the definitions, said the court, were unintelligible.[30]

Although the unrest continued -- albeit at a lower level of intensity -- TV coverage in the months that followed shifted from what was happening in South Africa to the growing calls for sanctions abroad, and to diplomatic efforts to defuse the crisis. The U.S. Congress adopted tough new limits on trade with South Africa, and denied landing rights in the United States to South African Airways. A veto of the bill by President Reagan, who preferred a policy of "constructive engagement," was overridden by Congress. Similar sanctions were adopted by the Commonwealth nations and by the European Common Market. Louis Nel blamed foreign media coverage for the setback. Foreign TV, he said, had offered "an ongoing show with all the violence required by its commercially proven recipe, as well as a cast of good guys and baddies. No wonder, then, that we have sanctions, and the threat of more to come. To a remarkable degree, foreign television has succeeded in pushing governments to take steps against South Africa."[31] Nel complained that "the peaceful side, reflecting perhaps 95 percent of our national life, is simply not aired."

The networks encountered further difficulties when tapes they sent from Johannesburg to London vanished en route. ABC, NBC and Britain's ITV all complained in mid-August that tapes had been tampered with or had disappeared after

being handed over to South African Airways for shipment.[32] Foreign correspondents also reported they had been called in by the Bureau for Information to discuss "problems" with their work monitored overseas. A bureau spokesman said South African missions abroad might see reports that were obviously biased, omitted facts or were not fair. "Instead of jumping down on a correspondent, or refusing a renewal of permit -- and in order to promote better communication -- the bureau was talking to journalists."[33]

Nevertheless, some restrictions on reporting were eased. At the end of July the ban on naming detainees crumbled when the Johannesburg daily The Star published a list of more than 3,400 people held under the emergency regulations. The Star said the names had in effect been disclosed once the authorities notified the families of the prisoners. The government took no action, encouraging other media to follow suit. On August 20 two more curbs were relaxed after court challenges by newspapers as their legality. State attorneys conceded that the two orders had not been properly promulgated. They were the restrictions on reporters entering black townships, and the ban on unauthorized reporting of security force actions. Journalists still were barred from quoting subversive statements. Television crews remained more tightly constrained than print journalists, however. The order prohibiting unauthorized filming of unrest and security force activity remained in effect, as did the ban on live TV news transmissions. The Associated Press reported on August 29 that the curbs on journalists had "eased to a point where reporting has almost returned to its pre-emergency status." This proved to be the calm before the new storm, however.

Period 6 (December 12, 1986-May 14, 1987): Threats of mass anti-apartheid protests over the Christmas period by the United Democratic Front, a coalition of political, labor and church groups, and a renewal of violence in the townships, led to the most severe censorship of the emergency. The regulations, promulgated on December 11, extended the ban on reporting of violent unrest, but also of non-violent campaigns organized by the United Democratic Front. The front's "Christmas Against the Emergency" campaign was to have included black consumer boycotts of white-owned stores. The new rules made it illegal to publish statements that encouraged the public to participate in a boycott;

discredit the system of compulsory military service; oppose any member of the government in his role of maintaining public order; stay away from work, or attend a restricted gathering. Unless cleared officially by the authorities, media were not permitted to publish reports on any security force action; the time, date, place or purpose of any restricted gathering, or give an account of any speech made at such a gathering; or anything relating to the circumstances, treatment or release of detainees. It was also ruled illegal to describe rent boycotts in the black townships.

For the first time the government imposed pre-publication censorship. It set up a panel to examine all news copy and film about the unrest before it could be published or broadcast. All unrest stories had to be submitted to the body, known as the Inter-departmental Press Liaison Center, which operates 24 hours a day and was coordinated by the Bureau for Information. Anyone who distributed material without first submitting it for approval was liable to a fine of up to $9,000, or up to 10 years in prison. Announcing the new curbs, President Botha said that "the state cannot allow overt and underground structures created for the execution of violent revolution to function undisturbed — neither within nor outside the country."[34]

The government continued to crack down on foreign journalists. In January it expelled Alan Cowell, bureau chief for the New York Times. In April, after a court ruling that seemed to invalidate the media curbs, police seized ten journalists working for foreign news organizations and confiscated their film of street battles between police and striking railway workers. Among those arrested were two NBC News cameramen. NBC said its bureau in Johannesburg received a phone call from the Bureau of Information offering "friendly advice from on high" that NBC should not use pictures of police operations. In May, the government expelled two TV journalists working for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. They were kicked out for trying to send out "reports containing gross untruths about South Africa." A week later, BBC TV correspondent Michael Buerk and ITN's Peter Sharp were expelled. Buerk and Sharp had been reprimanded by government officials in April after the BBC and ITN had broadcast film of clashes between police and students in Cape Town.

On May 14, however, the government ended pre-publication censorship and disbanded the Press Liaison Center, saying that a sharp decline in political violence had prompted the move. And the police Public Relations Directorate in Pretoria assumed the role of the Bureau for Information in releasing the daily unrest bulletins. The ban on filming unrest or security force action remained in effect, and was continued when the state of emergency was renewed in June, 1987.

Clearly, to the South African government the restoration of law and order is far more important than abstract notions of press freedom. Its objective in censoring the media has been to reduce the level of violence internally, and externally to mute the negative publicity the country is receiving. The question is to what extent they have succeeded. One measure is print media. At the height of the crisis in June 1986, the New York Times published 45 articles with South African datelines. Of these, 16 appeared on the front page. In January 1987, the first month after the most recent restrictions, it published 24 such articles, only one on page 1. Similarly, the Washington Post carried 35 articles with South African datelines in June 1986, 23 of them on page 1. In January 1987 it had 20 articles, with one on the front page.[35] Joseph Leyleveld, foreign news editor of the New York Times, told National Public Radio in March that "I am afraid that the South African authorities have largely succeeded in what they set out to do." Independent Television News correspondent Peter Sharp said that in March 1986 he sent an average of 19 different reports to Britain by satellite each week. In March 1987 the average was about four a week. "We're not getting those very, very dramatic pictures of confrontation in the townships which any TV editor would find it very hard to resist," said Sharp.[36]

The incidence of violence also has declined. South African authorities report that since the emergency was declared, incidents have dwindled to just a handful a day. Government figures show that the number of deaths in racial conflicts dropped from 665 in the first half of 1986 to 251 in the second half. Further evidence of a return to normality in the townships is that in February 1987 thousands of black students returned to their classrooms after two years of turmoil and boycotts.[37] Business activity has picked up and foreign tourism has

recovered since nightly scenes of rioting, burning and looting disappeared from the world's TV screens.

All of this suggests two questions. One is whether curbs on TV coverage of conflict situations can in fact force a story off the nightly news. As expelled Newsweek correspondent Richard Manning puts it, TV faces a stern test: "whether it has reached a level of sophistication that will allow it to report consistently from South Africa without the 'bang-bang'." The second question is whether the curbs have changed the type of news reported from South Africa.

METHOD

To find an answer we have undertaken on a content analysis of U.S. network coverage of events in South Africa. Since we do not have access to videotapes of all the newscasts, we are using the Television News Index and Abstracts prepared by Vanderbilt University. These are not ideal because they don't tell one much about the pictorial content of the newscasts. But they do indicate who said what, when and on which channel. The study focuses on the events of 1985 and 1986, but to establish a baseline we have coded all newscasts from 1982 onwards. This yielded a population of 1,179 news reports, with an average of two main themes each.

Each newscast dealing with South Africa was coded as to date, the network, whether it was a studio report or included a reporter in the field, whether it had live video or file footage, the length of the report, and its location. The unit of analysis was the theme. The content categories were derived from a purposive sample of the abstracts for the entire period. About 80 distinct themes were identified. These were collapsed into 16 larger topic areas. In each case we noted whether a theme was supported by a "sound bite" -- that is an interview with a person on camera, and, if so, who that person was. We also noted whether a person was quoted by the reporter without appearing on camera.

FINDINGS

The 1,179 reports over the five-year period were broadcast in roughly equal numbers by the three networks: CBS and NBC each had about 35 percent, and ABC carried 30 percent of the total. We divided the reports into two broad categor-

ies: those dealing with events inside South Africa, and those occurring outside. Most of the themes (67 percent) dealt with events inside South Africa. Of the remainder, most occurred in the United States, with occasional reports on events relating to South Africa from Europe and Africa.

By far the most common topics for internal coverage were violent protest against apartheid (26 percent), and security force actions to suppress anti-government activity, including the state of emergency, police actions, press censorship and bannings and detentions (27 percent). These two topics alone account for more than half of the internal coverage. Add peaceful demonstrations against apartheid -- marches, strikes and boycotts -- and one finds 70 percent of the themes dealing either with protests or the government's efforts to suppress them. Other frequent themes dealt with visits to South Africa by foreigners trying to negotiate an end to the apartheid system, and the effects of sanctions on the economy.

By contrast, only three percent of the themes dealt with what the government would regard as positive news, that is steps to move away from apartheid, such as the repeal of laws prohibiting sex or marriage between whites and other race groups, and the abolition of the pass laws that prevented blacks from moving from place to place. These were highly significant steps -- the first real moves away from apartheid since the National Party came to power nearly 40 years ago. Yet they were seldom mentioned, and when they were it usually was followed by an interview with an opponent of the government who declared that the changes were merely cosmetic.

Coverage of events outside South Africa was dominated by reports on demands for sanctions to bring about change (35 percent); of protests abroad against events in South Africa -- for example, demonstrations and arrests of assorted celebrities at the South African Embassy in Washington (20 percent). In these reports, arguments in favor of sanctions were quoted almost twice as often as those against. Another 27 percent of the external coverage dealt with condemnations of apartheid by the U.S. or other governments.

Altogether, then, more than 80 percent of the external coverage could be regarded as highly negative. The bulk of the remainder had to do with visits to

South Africa by American politicians, or delegations from the Commonwealth or the European Economic Community seeking reforms, and negotiations between the South African government and governments abroad concerning political and human rights.

We tested several hypotheses against the data.

Hypothesis 1:

Censorship would result in a drop in the number of reports about South Africa on U.S. network television.

This hypothesis is not borne out by the data. During the whole of 1982 and 1983 (Period 1), the three U.S. networks between them carried 51 reports about South Africa, or events abroad relating to South Africa, a combined average of one story every two weeks. When the violence flared in 1984, and TV was still free to film it (Period 2), the combined total jumped to an average of five stories a week (Table 1), partly because the networks sent full-time crews to South Africa. Then came the partial restrictions during the first state of emergency (Period 3). Instead of declining, the number of reports increased to an average of nearly eight a week. The number rose again to more than eight a week during the "free" period between the emergencies (Period 4). The biggest jump, however, coincided with the imposition of strict controls during the second, nationwide state emergency (Period 5). The average for the three networks combined climbed to 15 stories a week -- or five reports a week for each network TV evening news show. During the height of the crisis in June 1986, all three networks had reports every evening. Clearly the state of emergency itself made news, as did efforts to censor the media. There was as marked drop after the introduction of pre-publication censorship in Period 6. Even so, the average number of reports -- seven a week -- was still higher than during the 1982-83 control period when there were no restrictions.

A much stronger predictor of the level of coverage than censorship is the amount of violence that was occurring. One measure of newsworthy violence is the number of unrest-related deaths -- whether caused by blacks incinerating other blacks with gasoline-soaked tires around their necks, or by security forces

shooting protestors. The number of reports per month peaked at the same times as the number of violent deaths in August 1985 and June 1986. As the level of violent deaths declined, so generally did the number of reports (Figure 1).

Hypothesis 2:

Censorship would result in less reporting specifically about unrest in South Africa.

The purpose of the restrictions was to limit television coverage of violence. The first curbs in November 1985 (Period 3) banned filming of disturbances, riots and strikes in areas under the partial state of emergency, as well as action taken by the security forces to control them. The second emergency, in June 1986 (Period 5), extended these curbs to the entire country and also banned the reporting of subversive statements. The most severe restrictions, from December 1986 (Period 6), not only broadened the range of topics that were off-limits, but applied pre-publication censorship to reports on the unrest. We expected that the progressively more stringent curbs would result in fewer reports about events that could not be filmed. This was generally not the case. During Period 1, when things were relatively quiet, there was just one report every eight weeks on average relating to internal unrest -- defined here as demonstrations, riots, strikes, school and economic boycotts, political protests, security legislation, police action and media censorship (Table 2). In Period 2, when the school boycotts and strikes began and TV could still film them, this jumped twenty-fold to an average of two reports a week on the three networks combined. This increase coincided with the arrival in South Africa of more TV correspondents, drawn by the events there. When the partial state of emergency was declared (Period 3), the number tripled again to six reports a week on the three networks. Many of these concerned the state of emergency itself, and unrest in areas outside the emergency zones, like the Crossroads riots near Cape Town. In Period 4, the lull between the two emergencies, coverage of the unrest continued at a relatively high level, with an average of five reports a week. The imposition of a nationwide state of emergency (Period 5), with even stricter controls on the media, did not curtail the unrest coverage:

it rose again to an average of nearly six reports a week. This was in spite of a decline in the number of unrest-related incidents and deaths reported by the South Africa authorities. Only the imposition of pre-publication censorship in Period 6 saw a decline in the coverage, which dropped to an average of just over 4 reports a week. But this period is marked also by a continued decline in the level of violence as the emergency measures took effect.

Reporting on unrest as a proportion of all reports about internal events in South Africa also varied. In the first, quiet period, about 45 percent of all reports dealt with internal unrest (Table 3). This rose to 73 percent when the disturbances began in Period 2, and peaked at 85 percent during the partial state of emergency (Period 3). Between the emergencies, when the press restrictions were lifted (Period 4), the proportion of unrest reports was 83 percent. This dropped back to 67 percent during the nationwide state of emergency (period 5) and rose again to 79 percent during the period of pre-publication censorship. Clearly, to the networks the South African story was racial violence, and media curbs did little to change that perception.

Hypothesis 3:

Censorship would result in proportionately fewer reports about events in South Africa and more about events relating to South Africa that took place abroad.

In the first two periods, before the partial emergency, reports about internal events in South Africa accounted for about two-thirds of the total. One would have expected that during the first state of emergency (Period 3) the press restrictions would have forced a decline in the proportion of reports from South Africa. Instead there was a large increase, with nearly 93 percent of the reports dealing with events in the Republic (Table 4). This can be attributed to three main factors. First, South Africa became part of the international news agenda and more correspondents were sent to the scene. Second, the restrictions applied only to certain parts of South Africa, leaving the TV crews free to report on violence in areas not covered by the emergency regulations. And third, attention in the United States was diverted from American anti-apartheid demon-

strations by the explosion of the shuttle Challenger in January 1986 that dominated news coverage for weeks.

During Period 4, between the two states of emergency, the proportion of reports about events within South Africa continued at a high level -- 75 percent of the total. But coverage of related events outside South Africa, primarily in United States, increased considerably to reflect the growing protests against apartheid and calls for divestment and sanctions. In Period 5, the second and more rigorous nationwide state of emergency, while the absolute number of reports about internal South African events increased dramatically, the proportion they formed of the total coverage dropped to its lowest level in the five-year period under review -- 54 percent. This reflects the extensive coverage of U.S. Congressional action on economic sanctions, culminating in the overriding of President Reagan's veto of the legislation. The proportion of reports about internal South African events increased again in Period 6, despite pre-publication censorship, largely because once Congress had adopted sanctions public interest in the United States switched to other issues -- most notably the Iran-Contra scandal.

Hypothesis 4

There would be a change in the format of the reports.

We expected that restrictions would result in fewer reports about unrest in South Africa from correspondents in the field and an increase in the proportion of news about the unrest read by network anchors in the United States. The restrictions did have a marked impact on the format of the reports. During the relatively quiet Period 1, about 40 percent of the reports about unrest in South Africa featured live coverage by correspondents on the scene: the rest were read by anchormen in New York (Table 5). Once violence began in Period 2, and correspondents flocked to the country, the proportion of "reporter-wrap" presentations from South Africa peaked at 77 percent. It dropped to 67 percent during the partial state of emergency (Period 3), and to 63 percent between the two emergencies (Period 4). Despite the nationwide emergency (Period 5), the proportion

rose again to 69 percent. But pre-censorship may have been responsible for the drop to 58 percent in period 6.

While the absolute number of reports continued at a high level, therefore, the networks compensated for their inability to get live coverage from correspondents by having news anchors present "copy stories." Often these were a summary of the day's death toll and violence as released by the South African Bureau for Information.

Hypothesis 5:

Media restrictions on quoting "subversive" statements would result in fewer interviews with South African anti-apartheid leaders.

Of all the people shown expressing their views on camera during the five years studied, more than half (57 percent) were South Africans. About 60 percent of these people were clearly identifiable as opponents of apartheid. The person shown or quoted most frequently was Bishop Tutu, followed by Winnie Mandela and the Rev. Alan Boesak, then other anti-apartheid black leaders. The government spokesman shown on camera or quoted most frequently was President P.W. Botha -- although he appeared only half as often as Tutu. The impact of the curbs on the proportion of South African and American sources is not consistent (Table 6). In the first two periods the proportion of South Africans quoted was about 60 percent of the total. During the first state of emergency this proportion increased markedly to nearly 80 percent. That proportion held constant during Period 4, between the states of emergency. Once the second state of emergency (Period 5) was declared, however, with its ban on quoting "subversive" statements, the proportion of South African sources dropped sharply to 50 percent -- the lowest level of the five-year survey. This decline, however, can also be attributed to the increasing attention the networks paid to South Africa's critics abroad, particularly in the United States. The curbs did not appear to silence South African blacks. In fact Tutu was shown proportionately more often during the second state of emergency than during the periods that preceded it. But fewer reports featured interviews with Winnie Mandela and other anti-apartheid leaders after the ban on reporting subversive statements. One reason for Tutu's contin-

ued prominence is that he often was interviewed while traveling abroad where he could be quoted with relative impunity.

CONCLUSIONS

The study shows that in the short term at least the amount of coverage of South Africa did not decline after curbs were placed on the media, but rather intensified. Nor did its character change significantly. Despite the curbs, the emphasis remained on racial unrest and efforts to suppress it. Since the emergency regulations have had time to take effect, however, there has been a drop in coverage. The peak was in August 1985, the start of the emergency, when 116 reports were broadcast by the three networks together. The declaration of the second state of emergency, in June 1986, spurred 108 reports. By September this had dropped to 60 a week. In December it was down to 24.

Since then the decline has been even more noticeable. In June of 1986, ABC News had reports about South Africa in its evening news broadcast on 26 days. This dropped to six days in January 1987. CBS News had reports on South Africa on 23 days in June 1986 and seven last January. The figures for NBC were 17 and three, respectively. No longer do scenes of violence from South Africa lead off the evening newscasts. Also, government figures show that the amount of violence in the country has tapered off. The Bureau for Information reported in June 1987 that unrest-related incidents had dropped by 80 percent since the start of the emergency.

One cannot demonstrate, however, that the decline in the level of violence is causally related to restrictions on the media. There is a far stronger correlation between the number of news reports and the level of violence in the Republic, as measured by unrest-related deaths.

There is no evidence either for the assertion that curbs on foreign media are responsible for the decline in violence, although a stronger case could possibly be made for censorship of South Africa's domestic media. It cannot be disputed that both the level of violence and the level of TV coverage in the United States have declined. This could be because, as the authorities claim, there are no longer highly-visible TV crews in the townships whose presence

turns peaceful demonstrations into riots. It could be, however, that the actions taken by the security forces, including the detention of thousands of political activists, have led to a decrease in the amount of violence and hence in the level of coverage. Many anti-apartheid news sources used by the media are in detention, or in hiding. Finally there is the boredom factor. People get tired of seeing the same thing night after night, week after week. And they are easily distracted by new sensations. Perhaps the best thing the South African government had going for it in forcing the story off the nightly news was not curbs on the media, but the Iran-Contra scandal.

The moral seems to be that if a country wishes to black out news about its internal affairs it needs to do what Iran or Afghanistan have done -- that is to exclude foreign correspondents completely. Allowing correspondents in, then trying to control what they report, clearly is doomed to failure.

FOOTNOTES

1. Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang, "The News Media and Collective Violence," Economies et Societes, Vol. 1, No. 4, April 1972.

2. Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, "The News Media and the Disorders" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 1968).

3. R. K. Baker and S.J. Ball, Violence and the Media (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, November 1969).

4. New York Times, 15 July 1985.

5. Associated Press, 18 July 1985.

6. Katharine Graham, "Terrorism and the Media," address to the English-Speaking Union of the Commonwealth, London 6 December 1985.

7. See W.A. Hachten and C. Anthony Giffard,The Press and Apartheid: Repression and Propaganda in South Africa (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

8. South African Society of Journalists, The Journalist, August 1985.

9. New York Times, 11 September 1985.

10. United Press International, 11 September 1985.

11. Rapport, 27 October 1985

12. Christian Science Monitor, 4 November 1985

13. Christian Science Monitor, 6 November 1985

14. Editor and Publisher, 28 December 1985

15. Washington Post, 10 March 1986

16. Washington Post, 10 March 1986

17. Associated Press, 9 March 1986

18. Seattle P-I 12 March 1986

19. Associated Press, 11 June 1986

20. New York Times and United Press International, 13 June 1986

21. United Press International, 16 June 1986

22. New York Times, 16 June 1986

23. New York Times, 18 June 1986

24. New York Times, 18 June 1986

25. Associated Press, 22 June 1986

26. United Press International, 20 June 1986

27. Associated Press, 23 June 1986

28. New York Times, 25 June 1986

29. New York Times, 30 June 1986

30. United Press International, 16 June 1986

31. Associated Press, 15 August 1986

32. Associated Press and New York Times, 20 August 1986

33. S.A. Society of Journalists, The Journalist, August 1986

34. The Argus (Capetown), 11 December 1986 and The Pretoria News, 12 December 1986

35. New York Times, 1 March 1987

36. National Public Radio, "All Things Considered," 6 March 1987

37. South-North News Service, 26 February 1987.

TABLE 1

AVERAGE NUMBER OF REPORTS RELATING TO SOUTH AFRICA PER WEEK

Period	ABC	CBS	NBC	TOTAL
1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.5
2	1.4	1.6	1.8	4.75
3	2.2	2.5	2.8	7.75
4	2.0	3.1	2.6	7.8
5	4.4	5.5	5.1	14.9
6	1.7	2.3	2.4	6.4

TABLE 2

AVERAGE NUMBER OF REPORTS PER WEEK ABOUT INTERNAL UNREST

Period	No. of Reports
1	0.1
2	2.3
3	6.0
4	5.0
5	5.7
6	4.3

TABLE 3

REPORTS ABOUT UNREST AS A PROPORTION OF ALL REPORTS ON INTERNAL EVENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Period	Unrest %	Other Topics %
1	45	55
2	73	27
3	85	15
4	83	17
5	67	33
6	79	21

TABLE 4

REPORTS ABOUT INTERNAL EVENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND RELATED EVENTS ABROAD

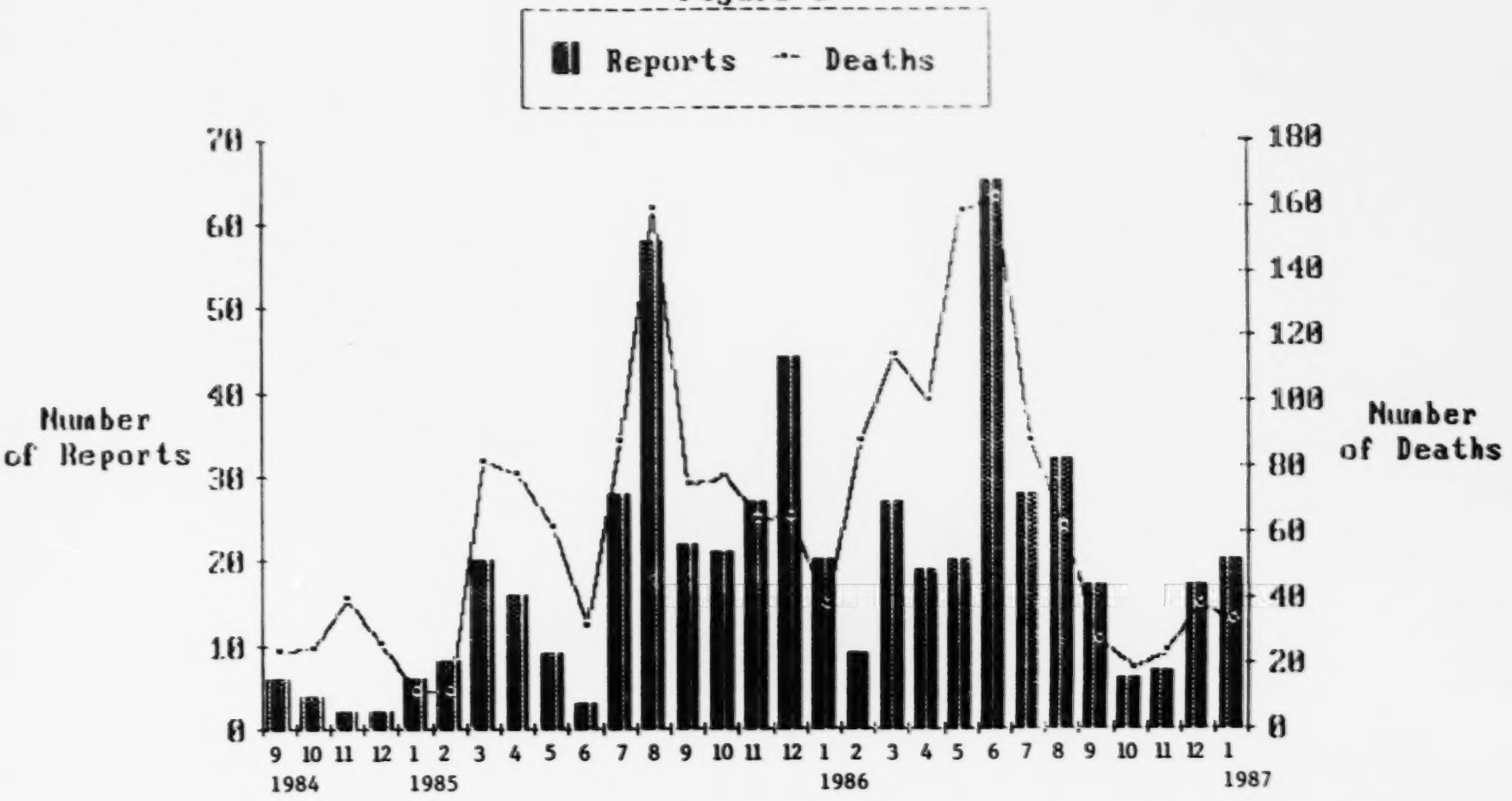
Period	Internal %	External %
1	68	32
2	67	33
3	93	7
4	75	25
5	54	46
6	78	22

TABLE 5

"REPORTER-WRAP" REPORTS ABOUT INTERNAL UNREST FROM CORRESPONDENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND "COPY STORIES" READ BY NEWS ANCHORS

Period	Reporter Wraps %	Studio Reports %
1	39	61
2	77	23
3	67	33
4	63	37
5	69	31
6	58	42

Figure 1



Unrest-related events and news reports
Sept. 1984 to Jan. 1987